

# News from Ed Markey

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

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## **MARKEY CITES DIRTY BOMB RISK AT U.S. NUCLEAR FACILITIES**

**Lawmaker warns of security holes in the U.S. and calls for tighter controls**

**Washington, DC:** Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and co-chairman of the Bipartisan Task Force on Nonproliferation, today released the following statement in response to the announcement that an Al Qaeda operative has been arrested in connection with a dirty bomb plot:

“This announcement is the latest piece of evidence that Al Qaeda is intent on building homemade dirty bombs for use against Americans. In order to properly ensure that such an attack cannot be successfully carried out in the future, we must take immediate action to plug the following security holes:

- In the past 5 years, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) reports that nearly 1500 radioactive sources have been lost or stolen in the U.S., but less than half of them have been found. The NRC has confirmed that in 1984, it ceased tracking radioactive sources by serial number. The NRC must ensure that recovering the remaining materials is a high priority. It also needs to immediately develop a system to better track these materials, and impose higher penalties when licensees lose these dirty bomb ingredients.
- There are currently no regulations requiring U.S. Customs to screen every package entering the U.S. from abroad to ensure that it is not leaking radiation. There is no requirement for radiation detectors to be placed at all ports of entry to the U.S., in vehicles used to deliver packages, or in facilities used to store packages for shipment to or within the U.S. This must be immediately rectified to ensure that terrorists cannot use our postal system or consignment carriers such as UPS or Fedex to ship radioactive materials to the U.S. for use in future attacks, just as the September 11 hijackers used our flight schools to train for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.
- The NRC does not track the numbers of foreign nationals employed at U.S. nuclear facilities, and does not require security background checks of any employee to determine whether they may be members of foreign or domestic groups that seek to harm the U.S. The NRC must immediately require all of its licensees to require such checks to be performed to ensure that these facilities aren't attacked by “insiders” who are employed there.
- Ten DOE sites, some of which are located near urban areas such as Denver, Colorado and the Bay Area of California, contain enough weapons-grade plutonium and highly enriched uranium to build a crude nuclear bomb. Numerous reports have indicated that these materials are not adequately secured, and the White House recently denied 93% of DOE's request for additional emergency funding to upgrade security. Congress must quickly act to restore these funds as it continues work on the Supplemental Appropriations bill.

Today's arrest of an Al Qaeda operative should be a wake-up call to the NRC, DOE and the White House. We must take steps to ensure that security at U.S. nuclear facilities is immediately and permanently upgraded, and that nuclear materials in the U.S. are properly accounted for and safeguarded.”